

The Cook

The cook wears funny, thick black shoes with turned up toes, and has an annoyingly new black and white checkered patch on one faded trouser leg. He is greasy, and overly comfortable with the waitresses. He enjoys life thoroughly through self-appreciation of his own humor and wit. He becomes over-irritable when too hot, or defied, and over-ingratiating when in a good humor.

Through the Swinging Doors

The nurse's office is a white place and a quietly busy one. Through the swinging doors at the left is a small resting room, with three cots, a locker, a mirror, a small old-fashioned desk that is closed and locked, and a chair. Each narrow bed has a gray army blanket at its foot. This room is not entirely separate from the other, but is only partitioned off. While you lie in its remote nearness, you hear a murmur of voices from the other side of the wall, as the doctor and nurse welcome, advise, and admonish all comers. Occasionally another person stops momentarily in the rush of the day, and she, too, finds a resting place through the swinging doors. And especially if it happens to be late in the day, a curious companionship springs up between the stranger and you, through your mutual weariness.

—GENE SMITH.

THE HIRED MAN

Some say I'm lazy; don't know why.
I rake and mow the Parson's lawn,
And milk and clean old Betsy's sty.
I take down screens when summer's
gone,
I'm powerful good at shuckin' corn,
And mighty quick at cuttin' wood.
Just 'cause I don't own any land
Don't see why folks say I'm no good.
Won't take a job, like brother Dan.
This town jest needs a hired-man.

—JANE MOORE.

Good Crop

Max Stuckey

The sharp spiteful crack of a rifle stirred the peaceful little mountain town into a hubbub of excitement.

The figure lay face down in the muddy street. The faded blue denims and ragged black coat were splashed with mud. The head and shoulders nestled deep in a large puddle.

No one approached it. A few people stood on the board walk and discussed the incident in whispers.

One tall grey-bearded mountaineer nudged his companion.

"I know'd hit would happen, Anse. Younguns always did stir up these old feuds. I heerd Mark Benton was goin' to kill th' kid. Mark never was a hand to say things he didn't mean."

Anse shook his head. "This is one time Mark bit off mor'n he kin chew. Thet kid's brother, Tait, is th' pizenest man in Pine Mountain country. Mark my word, this little fuss Mark started is goin' to end by Mark bein' laid right beside his pappy over there in the churchyard."

The grey-beard disagreed violently. "Mark's a smart boy. He'll have Tait under the Laurel before the first snow."

The argument grew more and more bitter.

"I'll bet my tobaccy crop agin your'n thet Mark gits Tait before spring," sputtered Big Dan, the tall grey-beard.

Anse nodded his head. They shook hands.

Fall came. Other men had paid with their lives in the family war Mark Benton had precipitated, but Tait and he were still treading the twisty clay mountain paths. Some day they would meet. One would see the other first and that other one would never know. That is the way most